

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Daniel J. Kritenbrink, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 77, nays 18, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 378 Ex.]

#### YEAS—77

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Barrasso	Heinrich	Risch
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Hoeven	Sanders
Booker	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Shelby
Carper	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Lujan	Stabenow
Coons	Lummis	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Tillis
Cramer	Menendez	Toomey
Crapo	Merkley	Van Hollen
Daines	Moran	Warner
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Fischer	Murray	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Wicker
Graham	Padilla	Wyden
Grassley	Peters	
Hagerty	Portman	

#### NAYS—18

Blackburn	Ernst	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Lankford	Sasse
Cassidy	Lee	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Marshall	Thune
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville

#### NOT VOTING—5

Burr	Johnson	Rounds
Feinstein	Kennedy	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 77, the nays are 18.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Daniel J. Kritenbrink, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### NORD STREAM 2

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I want to talk today about Russia. I want to talk

about Vladimir Putin. I want to describe to this Chamber a bipartisan victory that together we won, and then I want to describe, tragically, how President Joe Biden is giving that victory away to Putin and Russia.

To understand this issue, we need to go back to the summer of 2019. In the summer of 2019, Russia was in the process of constructing a pipeline called the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

Behind me is a map demonstrating where the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline runs. It is a pipeline that was to run from Russia to Germany, going underneath the Baltic Sea.

In the summer of 2019, the pipeline was nearly complete. At various periods in time, it was 70 percent complete, 80 percent complete. There was widespread consensus that if this pipeline were completed, it would have devastating consequences. In a few minutes, I will discuss those consequences in greater detail. But in an effort to stop the devastating consequences, I worked on bipartisan legislation, along with Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, Democrat from New Hampshire, and we introduced bipartisan sanctions legislation designed to stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

That legislation, when we introduced it, was almost immediately subject to a Russian disinformation campaign. In Europe, the Russians were saying to anyone who would listen that the Cruz-Shaheen sanction legislation could never pass; that there was no way Congress would come together in a bipartisan manner to stop the Nord Stream 2; that it was hopeless; that no one needed to be concerned that this legislation could pass. They also made the argument as part of their disinformation campaign that the pipeline was nearly complete so that U.S. sanctions could not stop it. There was nothing that could be done to stop it.

Well, to the surprise of nobody who follows these issues, that Russian disinformation was precisely that—it was disinformation. It was lies.

In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator SHAHEEN and I worked with our colleagues, and our legislation was initially voted out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 20 to 2—overwhelming bipartisan support.

At that point, Senator SHAHEEN and I began working to get it passed on the floor of the Senate. While we were doing so, the Russian disinformation continued: This cannot pass.

We endeavored to have our sanctions legislation attached to the National Defense Authorization Act, which was moving in the fall and winter of 2019. To do so was not easy. To do so, we needed to get the explicit signoff of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We needed the explicit signoff of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. We needed the explicit signoff

of the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Banking Committee. Then we needed the explicit signoff of Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, the Republican and Democratic leader respectively. All eight of those Senators needed to agree with our legislation for this to proceed on the NDAA.

And then we had to do the exact same thing in the House of Representatives and get the chairman and ranking member on Foreign Relations, on Armed Services and on Banking, and we had to get the signoff of NANCY PELOSI and KEVIN MCCARTHY.

To get the explicit support of all 16 of those congressional leaders—8 Republicans and 8 Democrats—in any world is not easy.

And I will say on my part and Senator SHAHEEN's part, we invested dozens, if not hundreds, of hours in terms of talking to our colleagues to build that bipartisan consensus, and we ended up getting that overwhelming support. In many ways, that support was miraculous.

Why is that?

Well, one of the reasons why Nord Stream 2 is particularly problematic is that Russia is building Nord Stream 2 in order to cut off Ukraine. There is currently a pipeline running through Ukraine and, through Nord Stream 2, Russia has the power to starve Ukraine.

Why is it miraculous in December of 2019 that we were able to pass this legislation?

Well, if you will recall what was happening in the House of Representatives in December of 2019, the House of Representatives was in the middle of impeaching President Donald Trump for alleged high crimes and misdemeanors concerning Ukraine.

If you will recall, from the trial we held on this Senate floor, central to the allegations that were raised by Democrats against President Trump was conduct concerning Ukraine.

It remains astonishing that right in the middle of a partisan gladiatorial battle concerning Ukraine, simultaneously we were able to get Republicans and Democrats to work hand-in-hand to agree with complete consensus that we were going to come together and stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. We were going to stop what Vladimir Putin was doing.

In December of 2019, our legislation passed. The Cruz-Shaheen sanctions legislation passed. Now, I will remind you what the Russian disinformation did when we first introduced it. They said it will never pass; and they said, even if it does pass, it is too late for it to have any effect.

Well, if my memory serves me correctly, President Trump signed the Cruz-Shaheen sanctions legislation at 7 p.m. on a Thursday. At 6:45 p.m. on a Thursday, 15 minutes before our sanctions legislation was signed into law, the company that was laying the pipeline in the Baltic Sea announced it had immediately halted laying the pipeline

and it was lifting anchor and sailing away. It was an incredible bipartisan victory. The pipeline was stopped in its tracks.

What happened next was absolutely nothing. For a year, the pipeline lay dormant. The talking points from Vladimir Putin—and now, sadly, adopted by Joe Biden and his administration—is the pipeline is 90 percent complete or the pipeline is 95 percent complete. But it is not rocket science that a 90-percent complete pipeline is zero-percent complete. Until you build both ends of the pipeline, it ain't nothing but a hunk of metal at the bottom of the ocean. Nothing is traveling through it until the pipeline is complete and online.

For a year, the pipeline lay dormant. Then in the year 2020, Senator SHAHEEN and I joined together again in a second round of bipartisan legislation, a second round of sanctions. We had stopped the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline in its tracks. For a year, Putin was stopped altogether.

And we came together for a second piece of legislation—the second version of Cruz-Shaheen—and just like the first sanctions, we passed it through both Houses of Congress and it was signed into law with overwhelming bipartisan support—nearly unanimous support of all 535 Members of Congress.

So we now had two major pieces of sanctions legislation on the books. Those sanctions had been working for a year and the pipeline was stopped.

Then in November of 2020 was the Presidential election. And in the wake of the Presidential election, Joe Biden and his transition team almost immediately began telegraphing weakness to Russia. Members of Joe Biden's foreign policy advisory team in the German newspapers expressed openness to Nord Stream 2 being built, expressed a willingness to try to circumvent the sanctions that had been working and had worked for over a year. Within days of Joe Biden and his team expressing weakness to Putin, Russia and Putin heard and they began the process of getting ready to return to building the pipeline.

(Thereupon, Ms. STABENOW assumed the Chair.)

Russia did return to building the pipeline. Do you know what day? January 24, 2021. Four days after Joe Biden was sworn into office, Putin said: We are safe. We are free. Our man Joe is in the White House.

And we know that the administration is not going to follow U.S. law anymore. And so on January 24, the Russians returned to building the pipeline.

Now, for 2 years, this body had been united, Republicans and Democrats, that we were going to stop this pipeline; but Joe Biden and his administration decided instead to waive the sanctions, decided instead to give Vladimir Putin what amounts to a multibillion-dollar gift—and not just a gift one time. If this pipeline is allowed to go

online, it will put billions of dollars in Putin's pockets every year, year after year after year.

What are the consequences of Nord Stream 2?

No. 1, Russia gets richer; Russia gets stronger; Russia gets billions of dollars that it can use to build its military, to threaten its neighbors, to threaten our allies, to endanger the lives of Americans and our friends.

No. 2, Europe is hurt. Our friends and allies in Europe are made even more dependent on Russian energy.

Our former colleague in this body, Senator John McCain—may he rest in peace—had a phrase for Russia that was memorable, that I have used many times. He referred to Russia as “a gas station with a country attached.”

That is Putin's plan. It is very simple. Putin is a petrol tyrant. He is a tyrant, he is a bully, he is a KGB thug, and all his aggression is funded by selling oil and gas.

Together, Republicans and Democrats in Congress had taken billions out of Putin's pockets; and, sadly, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS decided the world would be a better place if instead Putin had billions more not just this year or next year, but for decades to come.

When Putin is dead and buried and the next dictator is ruling over Russia, that next dictator will be reaping the benefits of this pipeline. Indeed, as a result of Joe Biden's decision, many are referring to this pipeline as the Biden-Putin pipeline for a very simple reason: It is Putin who is building it; it is Putin who is profiting by it.

And the only reason Putin is allowed to do so is because President Joe Biden has given a multibillion-dollar gift that strengthens Russia and it weakens Europe.

It makes Europe subject to energy blackmail. Putin has demonstrated a willingness and, indeed, a history of using energy blackmail, of using those who are dependent on natural gas to coerce them to do what he wants. In the dead of winter, when people are at risk of freezing to death, Putin has threatened to—and has, in fact—cut off gas to endanger the lives of innocent civilians in order to coerce governments to bend to his will.

As a result of Joe Biden's surrender to Vladimir Putin, Putin will have the continued ability to exercise economic blackmail against Europe.

But not only that. Europe has energy needs. Those energy needs could be readily satisfied by American energy. Europe has expressed a willingness and, in some instances, an eagerness to import American energy.

But Joe Biden has decided that American jobs are unimportant. On his first day in office, Biden shut down the Keystone Pipeline, killing 11,000 jobs in the United States, including 8,000 union jobs—8,000 high-paying union jobs that, with a stroke of a pen, Joe Biden eliminated.

And at the exact same time that Biden is shutting down jobs and a pipe-

line in America, he is green lighting and giving Putin a gift of a pipeline between Russia and Germany, producing jobs in Russia, producing billions of dollars in Russia, and taking away jobs in America.

This pipeline is a disaster. As the afternoon goes on, I will elaborate on different aspects on which it is harmful and on the steps we can and should be taking to stop it.

But at this point, Senator BARRASSO is here and has some thoughts he wishes to express, and so I will yield the floor to Senator BARRASSO for his remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to add my voice to that of Mr. CRUZ, the Senator from Texas, about Joe Biden's surrender to Vladimir Putin.

Energy is called the master resource for a reason. It powers our country, powers our military, powers this Nation, powers the economy. And yet Joe Biden, on his first day in office, seemed to take us from a nation of energy dominance to energy dependence, canceling the Keystone Pipeline and now approving this pipeline, Nord Stream 2.

I come to add my voice to all of those, and there are many who have spoken out against the President in expressing our deep concerns about this administration's unwillingness to fully sanction the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline and to allow it to move ahead.

I am sure Senator CRUZ, as part of his discussion this afternoon, will talk about the confirmation hearing of Tony Blinken to be Secretary of State. We asked him specifically about the pipeline, and he said he would stop it, no matter what. Even though it was down to the last—I think he may have said—100 yards, they would stop it.

That is not what happened. We saw Joe Biden surrender.

For years, we have been sounding the alarm about this Russian trap.

This pipeline, who built it?

Gazprom.

Who are they?

They are the Russian state-owned natural gas monopoly.

We have all quoted and, in the past, have heard Senator McCain talk about Russia, a country acting as a gas station or a gas station acting as a country. I think one time he went on to say that Russia was a Mafia-run gas company disguised as a country.

This dangerous pipeline is going to double the amount of Russian natural gas going to Germany via the Baltic Sea. Completion of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline is going to further tighten its grip on European gas supplies and extend the threatening influence because, as I said before, energy is the master resource.

We know Russia uses energy to coerce and to manipulate. They use it as a geopolitical weapon. They coerce and manipulate our allies and our partners

in Europe. Many of our NATO allies—Germany, in particular—are becoming dependent upon and addicted to Russian gas. Europe already gets 40 to 45 percent of its gas imports from Russia. The new export pipeline helps Russia undermine Europe's efforts to diversify energy sources, suppliers, as well as the routes.

Nord Stream 2 makes Europe more energy dependent on Russia and, of course, more prone to Russian influence. At the same time, it is going to further fuel Russian aggression, Russian intimidation, and Russian instability across Europe.

Putin is a powerful foe who aims to divide Europe and to destroy the NATO alliance. He has been broadcasting those plans. This is not a surprise. The Nord Stream 2 Pipeline would mean a massive money transfer from our NATO allies straight into the Kremlin's coffers. This means more resources to put toward Russia's destabilizing activities.

And we continue to see an increase in these destabilizing activities. Russia occupies territory in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Russia launched a military buildup on Ukraine's border. Russia poisoned and then imprisoned a political opposition leader. Russian hackers are creating economic chaos by disrupting American supply chains.

Russia could use these cash reserves in what way? Well, a way to fund aggression in Europe and around the world. And it is interesting that Putin even funds environmental activists in Europe to shut down energy where they would be exploring for natural gas and oil. He wants environmental activists to protest any efforts for the European countries to develop their own gas resources so he can hold them hostage in this way as well.

Well, President Biden's weakness on Putin's pipeline is going to have serious consequences, not just the financial ones for Russia and not just those in Europe but worldwide. And for our security and for the security of our allies, I believe we must stop this Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.

That is why Congress has overwhelmingly, this body, passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation. You know, people say to me: Can't you do anything in a bipartisan way in Congress anymore?

I would say: Well, we certainly did when it came to the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. We passed bipartisan legislation imposing sanctions on this very project.

Yet, this administration, the Biden administration—the surrendering Biden administration—is unwilling to implement the laws that are on the books. President Biden waived congressionally mandated sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, which is the company overseeing the pipeline construction. By using a national interest waiver, this administration gave Russia the green light to speed ahead to completion of this pipeline.

Look, there is strong opposition to President Biden's deliberate failure to follow the law when it comes to this pipeline and the supply of energy from Russia to Europe.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated March 3 of this year in which I led a group of 40 Senators in outlining our concerns.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 3, 2021.

HON. JOSEPH BIDEN,  
*President of the United States,*  
*The White House, Washington, DC.*

DEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN: We write to express our deep concern about the refusal of the Administration to impose sanctions on entities involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. With construction on the project currently taking place, there is publicly available information on vessels and companies engaging in sanctionable activities. The failure of the Administration to identify and impose new sanctions signals its willingness to allow President Putin to gain a stranglehold over Europe's gas supplies and increase its geopolitical leverage. We call on the Administration to correct its misguided actions by quickly and fully implementing the sanctions mandated by U.S. law.

The Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA), as amended by the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Clarification Act (PEESCA), mandates sanctions on the companies and individuals involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. The law requires sanctions against entities installing pipes, engaging in pipelaying activities, or insuring or certifying that installation, those activities, and other activities associated with the pipeline. As construction is under way, time is of the essence. The United States must act now to prevent the pipeline from being completed.

For years, it has been the policy of the United States to oppose the Nord Stream II pipeline, which would carry natural gas from Russia across the Baltic Sea to Germany. The intent of Congress is crystal clear. Congress overwhelmingly passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation imposing sanctions on this project including the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), PEESA, and PEESCA. The Administration cannot turn a blind eye to those who violate our laws. We request the Administration utilize all of the tools at its disposal to implement additional sanctions immediately, especially the most recent round of sanctions in PEESCA that both houses of Congress urgently and repeatedly passed last year.

On February 19, 2021, the Administration submitted a congressionally mandated report on entities actively supporting, assisting, and working with those involved in the Nord Stream II pipeline. The Administration made the troubling decision to identify only the Russian pipelaying vessel Fortuna and its owner KVT-RUS, both of which were already sanctioned under the Trump Administration in January. The report also listed 18 entities which have ended their involvement in the project, due to the extensive diplomatic efforts of the Trump Administration to wind down their activities. This completely inadequate report undermines the bipartisan efforts of Congress and previous Administrations by not listing the other vessels involved in pipelaying and pipelaying activities as well as companies providing insurance and certification services.

We call on you to fix this error by immediately identifying and sanctioning the addi-

tional entities without delay. While sanctions are being quickly processed on individuals and companies, we ask you to formally notify these entities of the forthcoming sanctions and call on them to stop their work on the Nord Stream II pipeline. In addition, PEESCA also mandates consultation with our allies, which must be conducted and concluded expeditiously.

As you have previously stated, the Nord Stream II pipeline is a "bad deal for Europe." This point has been clearly demonstrated by Europe's growing opposition to the project. On January 21, 2021, the European Parliament overwhelmingly passed, by a vote of 581-50, a resolution calling on the European Union to immediately stop the completion of the Nord Stream II pipeline. Previously, on December 12, 2018, the European Parliament passed a resolution describing the Nord Stream II pipeline as a "political project that poses a threat to European energy security" that should be cancelled. It passed by a vote of 433-105.

The Nord Stream II pipeline makes American allies and partners in Europe more susceptible to Moscow's coercion and malign influence. It would reinforce Russia's near-monopoly and control of natural gas in the region. In addition, the project would weaken efforts to diversify Europe's energy sources, suppliers and routes. The Nord Stream II pipeline would also provide Russia an opportunity to damage the economy of Ukraine and to further its aggressive actions in the region.

We appreciate your statements as well as those made by members of the Administration publicly opposing the Nord Stream II pipeline. It is now time to act. It is critical that the United States enforce our laws and hold those entities accountable for assisting Russia in building this dangerous pipeline.

Sincerely,

John Barrasso, James E. Risch, Ron Johnson, Ted Cruz, Cynthia Lummis, James M. Inhofe, Steve Daines, Joni Ernst, Kevin Cramer, Marco Rubio, John Hoeven, Tom Cotton, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John Thune, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Lindsey Graham, Josh Hawley, Rick Scott, John Kennedy, Ben Sasse, Thom Tillis, Roger Marshall, M.D., Charles E. Grassley, Susan M. Collins, Bill Hagerty, Mike Braun, Mike Crapo, M. Michael Rounds, Jerry Moran, Bill Cassidy, M.D., Tim Scott, John Cornyn, Dan Sullivan, Mitt Romney, Deb Fischer, Todd Young, Rob Portman, United States Senators.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, in this letter, signed by 40 Senators, we called out the Biden administration for refusing to impose sanctions on entities involved in the construction of this very pipeline.

It is a lengthy letter, and I am not going to read the whole thing, but let me point out, the letter says this:

The failure of [this] Administration to identify and impose new sanctions signals its willingness to allow President Putin to gain a stranglehold over Europe's gas [supply] and increase its geopolitical leverage. We call on the Administration to correct its misguided actions by quickly and fully implementing the sanctions mandated by U.S. law.

It has been over 6 months, and President Biden still refuses to follow the law. Through his inaction, President Biden is gifting Russia a new geopolitical weapon.

And one of the things I found most astonishing, in terms of this administration taking us from energy dominance to energy dependence, is what happened just last month. The Biden administration, seeing the impact of rising energy costs and rising gasoline costs—people in Wyoming paying more than \$25 extra every time they fill their tank compared to the day that President Biden came into office—he said: We need to do something.

His National Security Advisor actually went to say: We need to ask OPEC Plus to produce more oil and to produce more energy.

Well, who is OPEC Plus? Well, it is Saudi Arabia, and it is Russia. In our Energy Committee, of which I am the ranking member, Senator MURKOWSKI, the Senator from Alaska, came to the committee and told members of the committee that currently the United States is using more energy produced from Russia than it is from her home State of Alaska. What does that tell you about this administration and the commitment of this administration to energy needs in this country—in our own country?

It is very disturbing to see the President act in such a reckless way regarding our Nation, our economy, and our energy security, and continuing to give gifts like this to our enemies. It is much better to sell energy to our friends than have to buy energy from our enemies, but that is what appeared on the White House website, put there by the National Security Advisor to the President just last month, asking Saudi Arabia and OPEC Plus to produce more energy to help lower the cost at the pump for people in the United States here at home.

Well, why do you think we have it, Mr. President? You killed the Keystone XL Pipeline and put a longstanding moratorium now on gas production on Federal lands, which continues. There still has not been a lease sale since the day you signed that Executive order and the day you came into office.

We need to force the President to act on this critical issue of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. Yesterday—just yesterday—the U.S. House of Representatives—the body down the hall, with NANCY PELOSI as the Speaker of the House, the House of Representatives—passed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act imposing new mandatory sanctions on Nord Stream 2. It would repeal the national interest waiver for sanctions under existing law. Look, this is an incredibly important step, and I would look forward to it quickly becoming law.

Protecting this Russian trap that they have laid for the Germans and for Europe—the noose around the neck, the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline—it is in our national security interest to block that, but yet this administration is not doing it, and I believe it is a grave mistake on the part of this administration.

While President Biden has failed to do the right thing, there is still time.

The administration can reverse course and fully sanction the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. And if President Biden refuses, Congress is prepared to take strong actions to protect the energy security of our Nation and our allies.

And with that, I thank Senator CRUZ for allowing me to join in support of the comments that he is making. We have been wonderful partners, and other Members on the floor, in a bipartisan way, with a specific focus on what is happening with Russia and its efforts to undermine the United States, to undermine NATO, and to try to go back to, as they have said, put the band back together—reestablish the former Soviet Union, which Vladimir Putin has stated is his goal all along.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for his powerful remarks, and I thank each of the Senators who have worked with me, both Republicans and Democrats, in our successful effort for over a year to stop the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline—successful, right until Joe Biden became President.

I want to talk now about the precise dangers that are posed by the completion of Nord Stream 2. Many agree it would be a catastrophe for the security of the United States and for our European allies.

Nord Stream 2, if it goes online, would double the gas flowing from Russia to Germany while circumventing American allies that Putin targets militarily, diplomatically, and commercially. As a result, if Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will expose Ukraine and Poland to deep, long-term dangers, and it will leave them vulnerable the next time Russia targets them for aggression.

Right now, one-third of Russian gas exports to Europe travel through Ukraine. That provides Ukraine a curious kind of protection because Putin knows that he can't endanger that energy infrastructure without endangering his economic line to the world.

With Nord Stream 2, Putin and Russia are given, by Joe Biden and by KAMALA HARRIS, effectively open season on Ukraine. And when a year from now we see Russian tanks in Ukraine, we will remember this moment that it was Joe Biden's surrender to Putin on Nord Stream 2 that enabled Russia to carry out that aggression.

If Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will enrich Putin with billions of dollars to direct toward his malign activities. And, by the way, if you don't want to take my word for it, here is what the Polish Prime Minister said about Nord Stream 2; that Nord Stream 2 “strengthens Russia's power, helps President Putin to build a military power, [and] helps to intimidate other nations.”

In addition, if Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will solidify Russian energy dominance at the expense of European

energy diversification. If Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will deepen the corruption that tragically is endemic across Russia's energy sector, and it will export more of that corruption to Europe.

But I want to talk a bit more about the crushing, overarching danger of Russia using Nord Stream 2 for blackmail and for coercion. Putin uses energy as a weapon. We have seen that pattern over and over again. He uses energy for blackmail and coercion. He turns it off or on to punish resistance to his expansionism.

This is a real, acute, and proven threat. Russia turned off the gas to Europe in the winter months of 2006 and again in 2009 because of political disputes. The Kremlin company that owns and would run Nord Stream 2, Gazprom, has repeatedly cut off gas to Ukraine during political crises. It is open blackmail, and because of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS, Putin will have more power to blackmail our friends in Europe.

And it is not only me; it is not only Republicans; and, indeed, it is not only Republicans and Democrats in Congress who understand the magnitude of this threat. Our European allies understand fully just how disastrous Nord Stream 2 would be.

Ukrainian President Zelensky has said that it is flatout “wrong” “not to notice that” Nord Stream 2 “is a dangerous weapon” not only for Europe, “not only for Ukraine but for the whole of Europe.”

I want you to pause and reflect. President Zelensky of Ukraine said this pipeline is a dangerous weapon directed at Ukraine and the whole of Europe. Why is it being built? Because Joe Biden decided to give it as a gift to Vladimir Putin.

In a meeting with the Biden administration, the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister said:

Poland considers this project to be detrimental to the security of not only Ukraine, not only Central Europe, but also to the security of the whole of Europe, making the EU dependent on Russian gas.

If we give a damn about our friends in Poland, if we give a damn about our friends in Ukraine, if we give a damn about our friends in Europe, don't allow Joe Biden to allow Vladimir Putin to point this weapon at the heart of Europe.

In a joint statement signed by representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, here is what the Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee stated: “Countering malign Russian aggression is in the vital national security interest of the whole of NATO, the EU and our partners in Central and Eastern Europe,” and that “Nord Stream 2 is a geopolitical project geared towards expanding Russia's influence on Europe, through energy dominance.”

A question for every Member of this Senate to decide: Do we care about endangering the national security, about threatening, about making our European friends subject to blackmail? Do we care about what Estonia has told us, about what Latvia has told us, about what Lithuania has told us? Do we care about the Czech Republic? Do we care about Ireland? Do we care about Poland? Do we care about Ukraine? Do we care about the United Kingdom?

Well, our actions can decide that. Unfortunately, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS have decided that our European allies, their security is not of sufficient concern to them. And, instead, they have actively given this pipeline to Vladimir Putin.

My Democratic colleagues and, indeed, the vast majority of American lawmakers, also understand the precise danger of blackmail and coercion posed by Nord Stream 2.

In 2018, Senator COONS, my Democratic colleague from Delaware, said quite plainly that “we have to work with Europe to reduce its dependence on Russian energy exports and in particular to convince it to discontinue the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany.” Senator COONS continued: “As long as Russia dominates the provision of energy to Europe it will continue to hold a veto over many European policies and [it] will be in a position to weaken and marginalize countries like Poland and Ukraine.”

Senator COONS was right in 2018, and what he said is right today.

Joe Biden is committing a generational political blunder, a catastrophic mistake that hurts American national security and that hurts European security.

Congress has repeatedly passed sanctions targeting Nord Stream 2, targeting Russia’s corrupt energy market more broadly. Those sanctions, especially CAATSA and PEESA—and I am going to discuss in greater detail, later today, the specific sanctions legislation that is on U.S. books that Joe Biden is ignoring, that he is flouting, that he is disregarding, that he is refusing to enforce. Those sanctions impose mandatory sanctions. This body, Congress as a whole, Democrats and Republicans, past administrations—everyone has worked together not just to counter Russia but, specifically, to prevent Putin from being able to leverage energy as a geopolitical weapon.

The Biden administration, however, tells us they have a better solution, a better solution than both Houses of Congress, a better solution than following U.S. law. Instead of imposing sanctions to stop the pipeline, they tell us they have worked out a deal with Germany that they promise will prevent Putin from being able to use energy as a weapon. It is the best of both worlds, they say. They don’t have to use sanctions, and they still solve the problem of Russian energy blackmail.

President Biden said: “Chancellor Merkel and I are absolutely united in

our conviction that Russia must not be allowed to use energy as a weapon to coerce or threaten its neighbors.”

Those are nice sentiments, if they weren’t accompanied with Joe Biden giving a multibillion-dollar generational gift to Putin to do exactly what President Biden just said he didn’t want Putin to do.

Here is how an official from the Biden State Department described the deal: “There’s a clear commitment on the part of the United States and Germany in this statement that should Russia attempt to use energy as a weapon”—and, as an aside, they have done so over and over and over and over again in the past—“should Russia attempt to use energy as a weapon . . . Germany will take action at the national level and press for effective measures at the European level, including sanctions to limit Russian export capabilities to Europe in the energy sector, and that includes gas and/or other economically relevant sectors.”

So understand what they are saying. If and when Russia does what they have done in the past over and over again, if they do—one of the reasons they want Nord Stream 2 is to exercise economic blackmail. If and when they do that, Germany is going to send a really stern letter to the European Union.

One of my favorite movies that Heidi and I have watched many times is a movie called “Team America.” It is a comedy. It is done by the creators of the movie “South Park.” It is a movie that involves puppets. I will give a warning: It is a movie with an enormous amount of profanity in it. It is also one of the most sidesplittingly funny movies ever made.

In “Team America,” they talk about Hans Blix and the tool of sending a stern letter to the United Nations. The movie “Team America,” understandably ridicules that as being utterly ineffective. In the case of that movie, it was North Korea. But in the case of Putin, I assure you, Vladimir Putin has not lost 1 minute of sleep worrying about Germany’s letter to the European Union.

Once Nord Stream 2 goes online, it will become a dominant source of energy for Europe. Putin knows this. Merkel knows this. Biden knows this.

Turning off Nord Stream 2, which Germany has suggested: Oh, once we are addicted to the crack, we will just turn it off when we don’t want it anymore—that would be suicidal, which Putin knows, and he is counting on it.

It is as empty and hollow a threat as has ever been uttered on the international stage. And, even worse, we already know that it is a hollow threat because Putin has already, in just the last few days, crossed the line into using energy as a weapon.

So we don’t have to go back to 2006. We don’t have to go back to 2009. Let’s go back to last week.

In just the last week, it has become clear that Putin has been turning down

gas exports to Europe to coerce our allies into dropping opposition to Nord Stream 2.

The blackmail is open, and it is brazen. Russian and Gazprom officials have said: If Germany and the EU approve Nord Stream 2 coming online, then the Russians will turn exports back up.

On Friday, more than 40 Members of the European Parliament called for an investigation of the coercion, saying Gazprom was driving up prices to “pressure” the European Union into speeding Nord Stream 2 activation.

So I want you to pause and reflect. The Biden administration’s claim to prevent Nord Stream 2 being used as a weapon for energy blackmail is, if Russia ever does it, Germany will stand up to them.

Russia is doing it right now—not in 2006—well, yes, they did in 2006. Not in 2009—well, yes, they did in 2009. Today, last week—and they are not hiding it. They are saying: We are going to cut off your energy until you approve Nord Stream 2.

How exactly is the Biden administration claiming they are going to prevent the malign use of this pipeline? They are literally surrendering to blackmail right now for no reason.

You know, sadly, the reason—over the past 9 months, I have had conversations with just about every senior Biden State Department nominee, in my office, over and over and over again, about Nord Stream 2. Almost to a person, the nominees agree: Nord Stream 2 would be terrible. It would be disastrous. It would be bad for America. It would be bad for Europe. It would be good for Russia.

They all agree with that. By the way, Tony Blinken, the Secretary of State, said so vociferously in his confirmation hearing, and he said so even more vociferously sitting on the couch in my office. They all admit this.

So why, then, would Biden have committed this disastrous mistake? Sadly, I think there are two reasons. One, the Biden team entered office with an almost pathological revulsion to anything the previous administration did. If the Trump administration did it, it must be wrong and must be reversed.

Now, listen. None of us in this Chamber are naive. We understand politics. We understand that when one party takes over from the other party, they often reverse policy decisions. That is not unusual.

Obama reversed decisions of the Bush administration. Trump reversed decisions of the Obama administration. And there are a whole lot of decisions of the Trump administration that, sadly, from my perspective, Biden is reversing. As a general matter, that is why we have elections, and there are differences between the policy positions between the two parties.

But the Biden team is further than that. It is almost a pathological “if Trump did it, it must be bad.” Never mind that the Trump administration

did this only after the Congress came together in an extraordinary moment of bipartisan unity and passed this as mandatory legislation.

In my office, over and over again, with just about every senior Biden State Department nominee, I asked them: Please don't turn one of the biggest foreign policy victories of the last several years into one of the biggest foreign policy defeats of the last several years.

The reports came out, actually, that State tried to honor its commitment; that State—the Department of State—in the interagency process, argued for “let's follow the law; let's impose the sanctions.” And what public reports have suggested is that the Biden White House—the political operatives in the Biden White House—overruled State.

So even though State knew that the right policy was “shut down the Putin pipeline” and the wrong policy was “turn it into the Biden-Putin pipeline,” the Biden White House desperately wanted to stamp their imprimatur on this, because if it was done under President Trump, they were going to reverse it.

The second reason is that the Biden foreign policy team, for whatever reason, has a deep and abiding interest in giving to Germany whatever it is they want.

Now, look, Germany is an important friend and ally. We work together closely with Germany on economic matters, on diplomatic matters. We have long and positive relationships with our friend and ally Germany. It doesn't mean we agree with everything the Germans do, any more than we agree with everything any other ally of ours does.

Indeed, I will point out, in the past week, the Biden administration precipitated the French withdrawing their Ambassador from America—an extraordinary moment, which, I will point out, at least illustrates that we have a history of having disagreements, and sometimes serious disagreements, with our friends and allies.

But one friend of mine has a phrase—he puts it—that the Biden foreign policy establishment, they sleep with votive candles of Angela Merkel under their beds; that they view Chancellor Merkel as someone who must be surrendered to, acquiesced to no matter what. Never mind that Chancellor Merkel has an extremely limited tenure in office. She is on her way out. Never mind that the next successor government in Germany may well decide that they don't even want Nord Stream 2. This Biden foreign policy team, perhaps as a farewell gift to Angela Merkel, has decided that President Biden should surrender to Putin. That makes no sense. That is dangerous. It is harmful to Europe, it is harmful to Germany, it is harmful to America, and it helps Russia.

We are going to have an extended period of time to continue to discuss these matters, but at this point, I see

that Senator SHAHEEN is preparing to speak, so I yield the floor to Senator SHAHEEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The Senator from New Hampshire.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I appreciate my colleague from Texas being willing to turn over the floor so that I can give my remarks.

Mr. President, I am here today to discuss my concerns about the ongoing partisan obstruction in the Senate. First, as everyone here knows, September 30 is the end of the current fiscal year, and without action by the Senate on a continuing resolution—the mechanism to continue to fund the government—our government is going to shut down at midnight on the 1st.

So what happens if we don't pass that continuing resolution and the government shuts down? Well, critical operations will shutter. We have seen this picture before. Our national parks will close. We can tell our government researchers, including Nobel Prize-winning scientists, to leave their labs, and we would be doing this in the middle of the greatest health crisis of our lifetime.

A government shutdown also means that we ask essential Federal workers to work without pay. FBI agents, Border Patrol agents, TSA workers, weather forecasters, and others would be forced to continue their essential work, and they would be doing it for IOUs. We would promise them we would pay them, but there is no guarantee.

Now, it is puzzling to me because other countries don't do this to themselves. Government shutdowns put America behind. Look at the government shutdown that we had that went from December 2018 to January 2019, the longest government shutdown in our history. While our space scientists were at home, China landed the first rover on the dark side of the Moon—something that we had not done.

The continuing resolution before us also includes resources that will help Americans whose homes were flooded, homes were destroyed by raging wildfires or by hurricanes, including Hurricane Irma. They deserve our help, not more political infighting or partisan bickering.

We also owe it to our Afghan allies, who put their lives on the line to assist U.S. soldiers, to pass this bill. It contains critical assistance to help them resettle after facing imminent danger from the Taliban.

So from emergency housing assistance to resources for health screenings, job training, and other essential services, we can't let our allies down. We have already let some of them down because we weren't able to get everyone out of Afghanistan, and we are still working on that. But to then say “You are on your own” despite years of helping the United States? That is just patently unfair.

Secondly, as we are discussing the continuing resolution and keeping the government open, one of the things that our colleagues, our Republican colleagues, have said is that they are not going to increase the debt limit. I think we in Congress have a solemn obligation to protect the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government.

Treasury Secretary Yellen has told Congress that the Treasury will exhaust extraordinary measures that they have been using to pay our Nation's bills sometime next month. And let's be clear. The prospect of the first-ever default on our Nation's debt obligations would be disastrous for our economy at a time when we can least afford it.

Raising the debt ceiling is not about whether or not we should spend more money or incur more debt; raising the debt ceiling is about paying the bills we already owe, the bills that come due from the previous administration.

Minority Leader MCCONNELL himself has voted to increase or suspend the debt limit 32 times. And when President Trump was in office, Democrats in this Chamber—and I was one of them—supported raising the debt ceiling three times because we understand that it is grossly irresponsible for us to renege on obligations that our government has already incurred.

As a former Governor, one of the worst fears I had as New Hampshire went through challenging times during a recession, during a court-ordered change in how we funded our schools, was that the State would have its bond rating lowered. That would mean we would have to pay more on money owed. It would have an impact on everyone in New Hampshire. This is sort of the equivalent of having the bond rating lowered for New Hampshire, only 100 times, 1,000 times over. No; this is that on steroids.

Now, because we have a Democratic President, Republicans are saying they won't lift a finger to prevent this catastrophic outcome for our economy, for our currency, for the full faith and credit of the United States of America. This is not a game. The stability of our economy and the financial security of working Americans are at stake, and we have an obligation to pass legislation that has been sent to us by the House to keep our government open and to raise the debt limit. This isn't just about the United States; this has implications for our entire global financial system.

Sadly, Mr. President, the partisan brinkmanship and obstruction doesn't end with domestic and economic matters. I am also very concerned about the dangerously slow confirmation process of our State Department nominees and Ambassadors. What we have seen is a few Members of this body who are threatening our national security by slowing the process to schedule nomination hearings for qualified nominees, preventing votes on those State Department nominees who have